

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04930 041231Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 4930

EXDIS

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MILI, MOPS, LE, IS
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) SECTO 10029, (B) TEL AVIV 7530, (C) USDAO BEIRUT
IR 6 857 0097 77

1. WHEN I CALLED AT THE PRESIDENCY MORNING OCT 4 TO RECEIVE
PRESIDENT SARKIS' REPLY TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECENT LETTER
(BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL), SARKIS CALLED ME IN TO DISCUSS HIS
LATEST PLANS FOR SENDING LEBANESE ARMY UNITS TO SOUTH LEBANON.

2. SARKIS SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A REPORT FROM FOREIGN MINISTER
BOUTROS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING BOUTROS' MEETING WITH THE
SECRETARY. BOUTROS REPORTED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD STRESSED
THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING LEBANESE ARMY UNITS INTO SOUTH
LEBANON AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF
THIS REPORT, SARKIS SAID, HE HAD CALLED IN GENERAL
KHOURY AND ADF COMMANDER KHATIB FOR A REVIEW OF THE
LATEST PLANS. DURING THIS MEETING IT HAD BEEN DECIDED
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TO SEND APPROXIMATELY 300 LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS TO
SOUTH LEBANON, UNDER THE COMMAND OF SPECIALLY SELECTED
OFFICERS, TO TAKE COMMAND OF LEBANESE ARMY CASERNES IN
NABATIYAH, TYRE, AND MARJAYUN/KHIAM, AND TO ASSUME
CONTROL IN BINT JBAYL. IT WAS IMPORTANT, SARKIS SAID,
TO OCCUPY THE CASERNES ASAP SINCE THEY STILL CONTAINED
VALUABLE MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED

TO FALL INTO OTHER HANDS.

3. THIS PLAN HAD BEEN IMMEDIATELY COMMUNICATED TO THE PLO, SINCE THEIR COOPERATION WOULD BE NEEDED TO ASSURE THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY UNITS COULD GET TO THESE LOCATIONS WITHOUT INCIDENT, AND TO ARRANGE THE TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY IN TYRE WITH THE LAA. THE PLO LEADERSHIP IN BEIRUT HAD POINTED OUT THAT BOTH ARAFAT AND ABU IYAD WERE OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND ASKED THAT IMPLEMENTATION BE DELAYED UNTIL ABU IYAD'S RETURN TODAY, OCT 4. SARKIS SAID THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO AGREE TO THIS REQUEST SINCE PLO COOPERATION WAS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION.

4. THE PLAN NOW ENVISAGES PLO EVACUATION AND LEBANESE ARMY OCCUPATION OF KEY POINTS ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY. SARKIS SAID GENERAL KHOURY HAD SENT AN ENVOY TO MAJOR HADDAD EXPLAINING THE GOL PLAN AND HE, SARKIS, DID NOT ANTICIPATE ANY DIFFICULTY FROM THIS QUARTER. I SAID LATEST REPORTS I HAD RECEIVED INDICATED THAT ISRAELIS WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT INTERFERE WITH ANY WITHDRAWAL OF PLO FORCES AND WOULD ASSURE SIMILAR RESTRAINT BY LOCAL CHRISTIAN FORCES. ISRAELIS HAD ALSO RESTATED THEIR READINESS FOR ENTRY OF LEBANESE ARMY FORCES INTO SOUTH LEBANON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SARKIS SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WAS STILL THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMETHING COULD GO SECRET

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WRONG, HE NOW EXPECTED TO HAVE LEBANESE ARMY FORCES IN THE SOUTH BEFORE THE END OF THE WEEK, I.E., BY SATURDAY OR SUNDAY.

5. SARKIS SAID HE HAD ASKED GENERAL KHOURY TO PASS THIS INFO TO DATT BUT HE WAS TAKING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LET ME KNOW PERSONALLY THAT HE WAS MOVING AS FAST AS POSSIBLE TO GET LEBANESE ARMY UNITS INTO SOUTH LEBANON. WE AGREED THAT DATT WOULD KEEP IN DAILY TOUCH WITH GENERAL KHOURY SO THAT WE WOULD BE KEPT INFORMED OF LATEST DEVELOPMENTS.

6. COMMENT:

A. REF IR DESCRIBES IN DETAIL CURRENT LEBANESE ARMY PLANNING FOR ENTRY OF ITS UNITS INTO SOUTH LEBANON.

B. AS SARKIS INDICATED, INITIAL MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE ARMY UNITS TO THE SOUTH WILL BE A TRICKY OPERATION, SINCE THESE UNITS WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH PALESTINIAN LINES AND REPLACE PALESTINIAN AND LAA FORCES IN SOME AREAS AND CHRISTIAN FORCES IN OTHERS. SARKIS THEREFORE NEEDS

FIRMEST POSSIBLE PLO ASSURANCES OF COOPERATION BEFORE
COMMITTING HIS FRAGILE NEW ARMY.
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